

The Art Bulletin

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of America

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The Art Bulletin

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Address all communications to

JOHN SHAPLEY, SECRETARY,
COLLEGE ART ASSOCIATION OF AMERICA,
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PLATE XXIV



WASHINGTON, NATIONAL GALLERY: THE GENTLEWOMAN, BY J. ALDEN
WEIR.

J. Alden Weir

by DUNCAN PHILLIPS

It was only four months ago that Weir "went West," but within that time the best critical opinion, in his own country at least, has crystalized rapidly and acclaimed him with a remarkable degree of confidence as a man for the ages, as one who now enters upon a splendid destiny of imperishable and ever increasing fame. I do not feel certain that Weir will ever be one of the popular painters who are appraised at or above their real value by the general public. He never carried his heart on his sleeve, never painted pictures which correspond to "household words," never tried to entertain nor to educate the crowd. And he was utterly incapable of making concessions either for the sake of winning an adverse public or of overcoming the prejudice of influential persons in high places who failed to appreciate him through some academic blindness. He was beloved as a man for his sincere kindness and his enchanting courtesy, but he was capable of indignation. He was, if anything, more hostile to the intellectual dishonesty of the wise than to public ignorance, however arrogant; and his independence of thought and simple honesty of spirit were so great that he would not "play to the gallery" nor lead any of the noisy meaningless "movements" among painters which distribute "piffling" propaganda of one sort or another and succeed in achieving the easy notoriety which often passes for fame. Contemptuous both of sentimentality and of sensationalism, and tending in his own manner of painting to an expression marked by subtlety and even austerity, he was, in spite of all this, the most human and lovable of men, and the very essence of his art—what makes it great, what will make it immortal—is its warm and glowing humanity. Weir believed that art is not worth all the time and talk men spend upon it if it does not

quicken to more intense energy our inner consciousness, and if it does not stimulate to a larger and lovelier life our dormant faculties for living. If the value of art is measured according to its expressional power, then the art of Weir is a very great art even if it is not entirely easy of access. It is the pure gold deep in the earth, which we must dig to find, not the cheap gilding on the gaudy surface of commercial ornaments.

We have lost in Weir a painter of a great tradition—an artist absolutely individual and independent of any school, but one who belongs in the company of all those masters of truthful observation and personal expression in painting who have cared more for true and fine relations of color and tone, of light and shade, and for true and fine interpretations of beauty and character in the visible world than for the formal analysis of abstract aesthetic principles and the repetition of formulas for classical design. Weir was beloved by all factions in the rather overheated air of disputation in which, strange to say, art seems to flourish. There never was any doubt where he stood. Although a member of the National Academy since 1895, and president of that body from 1915 to 1917, he was nevertheless an adventurous spirit himself, open minded and sympathetic in regard to the adventures of the young men and frankly opposed to the tyranny of traditions and to all dogmatic intolerance. His reasonableness was so sweet that *poseurs* were shamed to sincerity and extremists sobered to moderation by his influence, recognizing in him a spirit no less young than theirs but mellowed by a temperate and judicious poise and a loyalty to high ideals. In his own work there is fundamentally a selection and a fusion of what was best in the truly great artists of many centuries. However, so fresh was his point of view, so spontaneous and ardent his response to the stimulations of life, so self-reliant his character, and so fond of experiment his boyish nature, that slowly, even laboriously, yet surely, he evolved and created for himself a technique which is his alone in the history of art and is the perfect medium for the expression of what he

had to say. Old masters as different as Velasquez and Rembrandt, Chardin and Gainsborough, Constable and Corot would have recognized in Weir an artist of their unmistakable kind. Jean Francois Millet stood before the prize-winning picture which Weir, a *Beaux-Arts* student at the time, had painted for his landlady of the Inn at Barbizon and exclaimed, "*Tout a fait distingue.*" Where Corot, Monet, Manet, left off, Weir carried on.

I realize that I should not be hazarding an opinion nor daring to estimate the ultimate place in history of one so near to me in time and so dear to me in memory. I loved Alden Weir, and now that he is gone it is more difficult than ever for me to write of him as an artist in a manner altogether free from the bias of my affection for him as a man. Fortunately, in this case, the man and his work were one. It would be difficult to estimate the man and his own special and indispensable quality without reference to his work which perfectly and exquisitely expressed him. On the other hand, it would be a most unprofitable business to study his paintings from the merely technical standpoint since there is no technical merit in his work, however great, which explains the enchantment of his art, which is absolutely a matter of charm—charm and nobility breathed into his best drawing and pervading that unerring instinct of his for fine choices which we may call his taste, so that his art and his personality seem to be somehow compounded and inseparable. Fortunately, also, in my own approach to the consideration of the art of Weir, whatever bias of affection might have colored my judgment had I been privileged to know him long ago, that factor does not enter, for I held a high opinion of Weir's art for many years before I ever came under the spell of his magnetic presence and his lovable personality. At that time I wrote in an article, "America can boast nothing finer than the art of J. Alden Weir." Revising this at a subsequent date after meeting and knowing the man, I merely added that America could boast nothing finer and *nobler* than the art and *life* of Weir. And after all, I could have written it thus at the outset, for

independent of hearsay, intent only upon the canvases I had seen at this exhibition or that, I felt as if I already knew a great and good man whose paintings drew me and held me by their incomparable air of quiet distinction of ideal Americanism. After I knew the man who had painted them I understood them better. I knew that they were the radiations of the man's own spirit, sincere, almost shy, yet virile and joyous.

The two outstanding points which I wish to emphasize are: first, Weir's expressional persuasiveness, his capacity to make us see and feel that ordinary human experience is desirable and delightful, and the world full of places and people inexplicably attractive and worth knowing; second, the very perfect spirit which pervaded everything he did and found for itself a spontaneous, yet subtle method of expression, so well adapted to it that it seems part of it, this spirit animating and refining the rebellious substance of his paint. There is a third point which I wish now to stress—his Americanism, his combination of certain traits which we like to think of as characteristic, not of what is common but what is best in the American. And in this third aspect of his art we shall only be considering again the first and second, for they complete my very simple conception and interpretation of Weir the artist and the man. Weir's Americanism was, let me admit at once, of a special rather than a complete or composite character. As has been said of him, "From the America of immigration and quantity production he stood apart. His task was to fix the survival of the older America," the Anglo-Saxon America of the founders of our old families, more particularly yet, the American developed in New England and New York. Weir carried into American painting, writes Frank Jewett Mather, in *The Review*, "a quality of aesthetic conscience akin to that of William Dean Howells and Henry James in his earlier phase. Whether his theme was a New England village or farm or a finely bred American girl, earnest, trained in scruple and nicety of thought and conduct, always he thought to tell the truth of the matter, neglecting none of the finer shades and overtones."

Now this subtlety of observation and this delicacy of feeling are not generally considered qualities either of American art or of American character, at least not by those who usually talk loudest and longest about what they call "the American note" or "the American flavor" in books and plays and paintings. There is a cult nowadays across the sea and among the European-minded art critics of our eastern cities for Americanism in art. Whatever good work is done that does not give the American flavor or sound the American note can be excused by these critics as an excellent by-product, but must be discouraged as liable to interfere with the production of the genuine American article. Indeed the American article in art has become one of our successful industries. The continental relish for the American flavor is now catered to consciously and carefully by novelists, dramatists, musicians, architects, sculptors, and painters, impatient to acquire European reputation. To be sure, Walt Whitman, Bret Hart, and Mark Twain did not have Europe in mind when they created out of the raw fabric of their own experiences *Leaves of Grass*, *The Luck of Roaring Camp*, and *Huckleberry Finn*, yet even these great men were susceptible to the lure of a foreign vogue for their native products, and they all lived to luxuriate in their own homely Americanism. Whitman especially seemed confident of his future influence with the European-minded critics. He was always arrogantly self-conscious in proclaiming that he thundered with the voice of a new continent and of a new evangel. Unquestionably, there was in the man a glowing enthusiasm for the human species and a rapturous exaltation about the American social experiment. The European-minded critics are certain that Old Walt represents what American art is or should be. They insist that America is not only frank and free and brave but also vulgar and vain and fond of creating a sensation. Now it is true perhaps that our American symphony calls for a few blaring thrills of brass, but, after all, the big bassoon cannot speak for the whole orchestra.

The paintings of J. Alden Weir unconsciously express the reticent, innate idealism which guides and

guards the better known materialism of America. It is an injustice to ascribe to the average American an indifference to that grace of spirit which we call refinement. We may be a shirt-sleeve democracy, but we have our own standards. The attitude of the average American to that undefinable, unmistakable something which the old colored servants of the South used to call "quality"—the quality of their masters—curiously corresponds to that undefinable, unmistakable something in a work of art which artists and critics also call quality, recognizing an air of aesthetic aristocracy. In the mind of Alden Weir the beauties of refinement, to which he was ever bringing his big, genial, whole-hearted tribute, seemed to require from him also a technical language of similar distinction. He could become interested in a long familiar and unremarkable pasture or in an inconspicuous sort of person, and, without flattering in the least, could make us see what he had found to like and admire. Whether convinced or not, our hearts go out to him for believing and saying and repeating that homeliness covers but cannot conceal the beauties which are near and endeared by association and distinguished not by conventional comeliness but by essential character. Of such a kind was the idealism of Weir and in spite of the European-minded critics we know that this chivalry of thought and this idealizing love of familiar things are traits of the fundamental, the original American.

His themes were American, his mind was American, his method was American, he was American heart and soul. Of his patriotism there are many stories told. Although forty-six years old at the time of the war with Spain, he volunteered for active military service. I shall never forget the fire in his eyes as he spoke of our national dishonor in the unhappy early years of the World War. Nor will the splendid memory fail of that inclement day when Weir, old and ill and lame, but bouyant, ardent, eager to show his colors, marched with the artists in the "Preparedness Parade." It is only natural that Weir's national spirit should have

been strong, for the child is father of the man, and Weir's childhood was spent at West Point where his father, Robert W. Weir, was professor of drawing from 1834 to 1877 in the U. S. Military Academy. J. Alden Weir was born at the Point, August 30th, 1852, one of sixteen children. He was a normal, active, athletic American boy and there was nothing precocious either in his mind or in his talent. In fact, he showed no exceptional talent in the days when he first tried his hand at drawing under his father's instruction in the old barn back of the house. Nevertheless, the boy's enjoyment of pictures developed rapidly and he was determined to become an artist. His taste preceded his talent and he showed very soon that art was his natural language, that the root of the matter, so to speak, was in him. Given this inherent, aesthetic instinct, and the patient, self-reliant tenacity of purpose which characterized him from the first, and he was certain sooner or later to succeed.

As a newspaper critic once shrewdly suggested, if Weir had in his student days worked in an intimate relation with some great artist who had been also a congenial spirit and who would have helped him to mature his individuality of mind and hand, a master who would have borne the same relation to him that Twachtman bore to Ernest Lawson, he would probably have arrived and found himself and formed his own peculiarly distinguished style much sooner than he did. The man who almost, though not quite, performed this service for Weir was the Frenchman, Bastien Lepage. Weir went to Paris to study painting in 1873, and was enrolled in the *Ecole des Beaux-Arts* under Gerome, the painter of large, historical tableaux which show infinite labor and archaeological research and imitative drawing. Consequently, the pictures young Weir painted during his first year in that studio were "*a la Gerome*," and that means the antithesis of what he himself was destined to do. Although he never lost his admiration for Gerome as a teacher and was always glad to have had such grounding in correct drawing and minute observation as

the pupils of this stern old painter could not fail to receive, yet it was not long before the student saw the coldness and hardness of the method of his master, and even before he left the studio, other lights were leading his undecided steps in very different directions. Gerome disapproved violently of Courbet and the Impressionists, yes, even of Millet and Corot, but, to his credit be it said, he never interfered with the temperamental predilections of his pupils. He trained them conscientiously and solicitously in their drawing, but when they knew how to draw, he sent them on their separate ways with his blessing. In 1873 Weir met for the first time Jules Bastien Lepage, and subsequently became the intimate friend of this brilliant young Frenchman who, like so many other artists destined to an early death, matured rapidly and achieved in early youth both a style and a reputation. Bastien at twenty-five seems to have been regarded as a leader, as a *chère maitre* by the group of art students who gathered around him and were his comrades. Alden Weir was of this group.

In the book, *Modern French Masters* (Century Co. 1896), which presented biographical appreciations by American painters, the chapter on Bastien Lepage was written by Weir. It is full of intimate talk about the subjects which were of supreme interest to the Parisian art student of his time. Many a pupil of Gerome shared Weir's revolt against the artificiality and the perfunctory elaborations turned out with great effort in the name of art for the applause of the populace and the awards of the government. There was a great cry for a return to nature. At Mlle. Anna's restaurant, in the particular circle where young Bastien dined with his admirers, hung a picture of a French holiday in spring, which he had given in payment of his account. This picture was decorated by the boys when Bastien failed to win the *Prix de Rome* with his picture, *The Angel Appearing to the Shepherds*, and not one of the group but felt assured of the superiority of their wisdom to that of the members of the academic jury who had so stupidly failed to honor themselves in honoring their

ideal. Bastien invited them all to visit him at his home in the village of Damvillers during the fête of the village, and Weir describes the experience with delight in the memory. As he says, "We loved Bastien for his honesty, his truth and his sincerity," and he retained a good part, if not all, of his boyish enthusiasm for the French realistic art with its genuine love of nature and human nature, its unaffected simplicity, its kinship of line to Holbein, its popular adaptation of the subjects of Millet and the true values of Manet. I have touched at some length on the friendship with and personal influence of Bastien because there is something very significant of Weir's character in the fact that, unlike so many others who felt the charm of this master, Weir showed no trace of imitation of the Bastien *motif* in the work done at this time.

As a student, Alden Weir painted genre, still life, portraits, and landscapes, and only his very earliest works, which he destroyed, showed the influence of Gerome. I have seen evidences of his extraordinary versatility in these formative years, a charming head of a young Breton girl, a story telling picture called Burying the Pet Bird suggesting the Frenchman Boutet de Monvel, a Vollon-like still life, a romantic figure composition with light and shade suggesting the influence of Italy, finally, a bright and rather tight little landscape giving promise with its joyous intimacy of mood of the great landscape poems of later periods. The handsome young American was adaptable, impressionable, responsive to many influences and all of them fine ones. But he had not found himself in those days. He was traveling pleasant ways, seeking beauty everywhere, unconsciously searching for himself and failing to find his own individual expression. In 1876 he went to Spain and thenceforth Velasquez became his god of painting. It was only after seeing Velasquez that Weir really caught up with the advances made in his own time by such men as Whistler, Fantin and Manet. Returning to the United States in 1877, he spent the next two years in New York in John F. Weir's studio in the Benedict

Building. It was then he painted *The Muse of Music*, a very handsome and well painted thing in the grand manner, formal and not entirely sincere, for the grand manner did not come naturally to Weir, who was always what the French call an *Intimist*. In 1880 Weir won a medal in the Salon and went with Bastien to Belgium. In the summer of 1881 he went to Holland with his brother and John H. Twachtman. This was the beginning of the intimate friendship of the two great American artists. From all accounts it was a delightful summer, and Weir grew to reverence Rembrandt for tone and poetry, and Franz Hals for his bold mastery of medium, and as never before to love landscape *motifs*, the immense skies of Holland with their ever changing and never failing fascination of light. In 1883 Weir was again in Paris, and on this trip he was chiefly interested in the Impressionists, becoming so convinced of their importance that he purchased many of their works for Mr. Erwin Davis, who had commissioned the young American painter to buy for him some representative examples by the contemporary Frenchmen, relying upon his taste, his already celebrated eye for true quality in works of art. Fortunately, through Weir's influence, the *Joan of Arc* by Bastien and the *Woman with Parrot and Boy with Sword* by Manet passed from the Davis collection to the Metropolitan Museum, where they are monumental to the wisdom of Weir, and where they have exerted a powerful influence in the development of American art. By this time Weir's taste was formed. It remained for him, however, to work out his own artistic destiny and save himself from the quicksands of eclecticism. It is said that when Weir came back from Paris in 1877 he was in appearances, in taste, and in manner a charming Parisian. Although the years abroad had been for him a period of great inspiration and enjoyment, and although Europe had given him his education as an artist, nevertheless, he never seems to have even seriously considered the idea of living outside of his own country and, after his return in 1883, he married and settled down on a farm in Connecticut, exhibiting

pictures with regularity in New York and Boston and becoming the most American of Americans. He made hosts of friends with his enchanting smile and his genial sportsmanship. One knew that under the surface there was rugged manliness which could be aggressive, but one knew also of the kindness and tenderness of the man and his high ideal for art and conduct. He was soon elected a member of the Tile Club which included among many of New York's most representative men in the various arts, William M. Chase, Frank D. Millet, Edwin A. Abbey, Hopkinson Smith, and Augustus St. Gaudens. During this period his style was still in the process of being formed through the knowledge gained by constant experiment. He knew what he wanted to say. The American portraits and landscapes which he wished to paint were already in his mind's eye, but at the exhibitions during the 80's Weir was represented by pictures which won the praise of the more discerning critics for their color rather than for their originality. He revealed what he had learned in Europe, and his aim seemed to be, what with Chase it always was, to show America *le bon peinture*, the intrinsic beauty of surface obtainable in oil painting which ought to be cherished for its own sake. It was what America needed at the time, this emphasis of the young man upon art for art's sake, this insistence that in art, subject, however pretentious, is of no consequence without style which may dignify the slightest subject. Weir's still life of this period is as distinguished as that of Vollon and superior to what Chase and Emil Carlsen were doing at the time. Collectors are proud today if they have kept the luscious paintings of flowers which they probably acquired without due appreciation of their historical importance. Those things possess so rich and unctuous a pigment, so charmingly rendering their subjects with especial regard to richness of tone and texture that they would make Weir sure of a reputation as a "painter's painter" even if he had not gone on to greater achievements. While America was learning to recognize quality in painting through just such masterly works as these

by Weir, the young painter himself was experimenting with new methods, new ideas, and a new palette. The portraits which he exhibited at this time indicate the chosen direction of his progress, but they were considered, and correctly so, inferior to his still life. They show his desire to emulate the wonderful dull blacks of Franz Hals and Manet, and their even more wonderful flesh kept gray and flat by a diffusion of enveloping atmosphere rather than accented and modelled in arbitrary light and shade. But Weir missed the magic of these secrets known only to Manet and Hals, and today his early portraits seem rather dull and austere.

The turning point in Weir's artistic life came in 1891, when at the Blakeslee Galleries he showed for the first time a collection of landscapes in the high key of color and with the transparent shadows of the French Luminarists. A second important landmark was the exhibition at the American Art Galleries in 1893 of works by Weir and Twachtman, together with a few pictures by Monet and Besnard which were included for purposes of explanation. The newspaper critics applauded the celebrated Frenchmen but lacked the courage to praise their American disciples. Weir and Twachtman had become converts to this new style of painting and of observation. Both of them set to work to study the great out-of-doors with their new eyes, and to experiment with the application to canvas of broken colors, which by the demonstration of Monet had been proved capable of recombination, not by mixture but by juxtaposition, so as to give a closer suggestion of light containing and consisting of all the colors of the spectrum. While still painting and exhibiting tonal pictures of most discreet conservatism, Weir and Twachtman were preparing to apply Monet's method to American subjects and to carry it on with modifications which would make it more adaptable to individuality of expression and more amenable to beauty. No one else, perhaps not even the artists themselves, realized the importance of the steps they were taking. These American pupils were to surpass their French masters by making their

method more flexible and more spiritual, while retaining all the truth and all the vitality. But the first experiments were not impressive. In fact, Weir's early effects of sunshine were often very weak, suggesting a sun trying to come out of a fog. The tonal harmonies were charming, however, and the soft colors suggested to the contemporary critics the qualities of pastel. Weir had won a reputation as a masterly painter, so the critics were on their guard against any hasty accusation of incompetence. But people said, "Too bad—another good man gone wrong," and the critics damned with faint praise, and only one or two seemed to realize the tremendous importance of this forward march by two gallant spirits not content to stand still. A little later Childe Hassam and Theodore Robinson came back from France with sparkling rainbow palettes and began to paint with a greater facility in the new style, an earlier attainment of their full powers than the early efforts of Weir and even of Twachtman. But the two great American painters of spiritualized naturalism proceeded on their own way, showing the results of their study of Monet, but, unlike Hassam, showing also their intention to depart from his method and to adapt it to their own ends. What matters it now that those early landscapes of Weir's were often loose without much strength, and shadeless without much light? The important fact is that they were great art in the making. And they intrigue us! We are conscious of something very personal and somehow very original trying to get itself said in a language not yet entirely familiar. There is a timidity and a recognition of difficulties. But the spirit pervades the substance. And occasionally there is a wonderful work of art full of touching poetry of remembered atmosphere, of memories adsorbed in moods of sensitive response and transferred to canvas with an art which seems as yet more a matter of happy and lucky inspiration than of confident mastery of method.

I have a small landscape of about this time, a country lane in spring with a glad sun shining and a

hint of birdsong in the sweet, still air. There are radiant pinks and tender greens, an endearing touch, a lyric charm. Usually the sun in the early Weir landscapes did not shine so well. But they are invariably full of dimly lighted or partially shaded places which are marvels of tone. It is certainly not difficult for us now to see the great Weir emerging out of these formative pictures which were in their day accounted failures. Some critics had faith in them. Clarence Cook wrote in 1891: "Weir sees as the Venetians and Velasquez rather than as Raphael, Dürer, and Ingres, with their hard, precise and analytic eyes. And these new works show no violent change. They are the logical outcome of Weir's artistic tendency since his return from Europe. Only the key has changed. The man is on his way," Here was one critic who saw that Weir was approaching, if indeed he had not already arrived at, that initial stage of all the art that is truly great—when the method is discovered, and occasionally the scope and aim of it realized, whereby one's own innermost individual *something* may be given to the world to add to the sum of the world's treasure.

And so after ten years of experiment and cultivation the art of J. Alden Weir came at last to fruition. He was destined to say in his chosen way something that needed to be said about his native land, and to say it more exquisitely, with greater delicacy of feeling and distinction of style than lay within the powers of any other American. The large, formal figure compositions, the still life, even the early sombre portraits were only practice for the ultimate themes. When he had thoroughly mastered his craft and learned from experience and won for himself a hearing and established a reputation, he then deliberately turned his back on everything he had done, disregarding the material success which could have been his for the asking had he continued along more traditional lines, and broke ground in more untilled fields. Chalky and dull in color as the earliest landscapes in high key may have been at their worst, they were, nevertheless, eloquent of

the great American poet-painter who had finally found himself and who could be counted upon for an ever increasing mastery of his method and for works of the most personal, inimitable artistry and the most sensitive and beautiful emotions. Having discovered and attained to his own predestined style, his work became for the first time the spontaneous natural expression of his own life and character. Thereafter his pictures form links of record of a rare personality devoted with single-hearted sincerity to the expression of the simplicities of life, the finer experience of everyday which are revealed only to spirits of singular sweetness. The rare intimacy of the pictures of Weir, their true delight in little things and familiar surroundings, their wholesome joy in life's untroubled hours of serenity and genuine contentment remind me of Chardin, the difference being that the Frenchman's pleasure was in the domestic interior, whereas Weir's was out-of-doors, on the farm, in the fields and woods, at the hospitable hearth only after nightfall. But both men wrote in terms of exquisite tone, color, and atmospheric envelopment their appreciation of the quiet joys of just being alive from day to day with a chance to observe how lovely things really are if we know how to see. Velasquez had taught him how to see, how to find the elements of beauty anywhere and to make for himself, by means of exquisite craftsmanship, true patterns of form and line and texture and colors harmonized in light and air, a world of enchanting realities. It is, however, of Chardin's scales of values, particularly his gamut of lovely grays and tawny tones that Weir's palette reminds me. And in both men there was that expressive intimacy of spirit, that art which became a part of their own lives and their way of conveying to others their satisfaction in life. From the time when Weir first began to exhibit his paintings in the new method there is no better way of knowing his life than through his art.

In the first exhibition at the Blakeslee Galleries in 1891 hung the now well known picture, *The Christmas Tree*. It was with a father's love that he painted the

exciting moment in a little girl's life when at bedtime Christmas Eve she tiptoes in her nightie into the room to behold The Tree in all its glory. Every bauble and every bit of tinsel comes straight from Fairyland, and in later life I wonder will she ever thrill to glamor more enthralling than that rapture from the candles. Her eyes are big with awe and wonder, yet with pride, too, of possession and with solicitude for the safety of so many treasures to be left untouched till morning. At the exhibition the critics were amazed at the daring of this picture with its flickering illumination and color reflections. Today its impressionism is of less interest than its sentiment.

Very personal also are the landscapes which Weir painted on his own farms. He spent six or seven months of each year in Connecticut, where he owned two country places and where he hunted and fished in season. He would spend alternate summers at Wyndham and Brancheville. The place at Wyndham is an estate of 350 acres and has been in Mrs. Weir's family for a hundred and fifty years. A ball in honor of Lafayette was once given in this house. Each generation of Mrs. Weir's family has added to the original structure until now it is large and rambling and full of quaint charm. There are ancient forest trees round about, which many of us know in the landscapes not only of Weir, but of his friend, Emil Carlsen, who lived nearby for many summers. The other place, at Brancheville, is of 200 acres, heavily forested with fine old timber. The old house has an immense living room with an old oak floor, and its windows are quaint Dutch ones which Weir brought from Holland. Once when a party of friends joined Weir for a week of fishing in the spring, three cords of wood were burned in two days in the two vast fireplaces at opposite ends of this room. Six-foot logs are offered up and the sacrificial blaze is a roaring one. It is pleasant to think of Weir's handsome, silvered head in the firelight, his eyes merry with anecdote or softened with sentiment. He was a delightful story-teller and a great listener to the stories of others, for his big

laugh was of the kind that warmed the heart. Around this fire he painted, his hunting dogs asleep after a hard day in the woods. Fishing was a passion with Weir. Recently I was looking over his scrap books, and most of the press clippings were not about art at all but about *The Elusive Trout*, *Beguiling the Tom Cod*, *The Sensitive Salmon*, etc. It may seem rather surprising that among his landscapes we find few records of the sport he loved so well, no pictures of little rivers where he waded hip high, and of shadowy pools into which he dropped his tempting flies! Evidently he felt that art had no more to do with sport than with politics and business. It was his life work to search for beauty and then to express it. Sport was his relaxation into which he could plunge with whole-hearted gusto, leaving art behind. There are two pictures entitled *The Fishing Party*, both very lovely landscapes with figures enveloped in silvery sunshine, but they are for connoisseurs of rare beauty—not for sportsmen. He was fond of telling stories, but not on canvas.

One of the most charming and one of the most completely representative of Weir's paintings is *The Donkey Ride*, showing his daughters, Dorothy and Cora when they were little girls, mounted on dainty and demure gray donkeys against a beautiful background of hillside and summer sky. This picture, from a decorative standpoint, is a thing of rare loveliness. In texture and color it is not unlike a mellow old tapestry. The design is as fine as if it had been by some master of the eighteenth century, when Japanesque caprice rather than classic convention ruled and when the composition of a pictorial theme was like a quaint and captivating melody. Often, by the way, we are reminded of the spirit of the eighteenth century in England. As Royal Cortissoz has observed, "There is the Old English flavor of those winsome color prints, *The Cries of London*, in such a picture as *The Flower Girl*." But to return to the *Donkey Ride*, I consider it a complete expression of the art of Weir, for it has not only his exquisite taste and sense of pictorial beauty and his power to create

it afresh with a charm peculiarly his own, but it is a poem on all happy American childhood in the country.

The one truly lyrical picture by the Great Velasquez is that of little Prince Balthasar Carlos taking a pony ride on a brisk morning of wind and sun. There is exhilaration in it, a sense of physical joy of a gallop in the hills and a child's rapture at freedom and rapid movement. A more tranquil mood pervades this donkey ride of the Weir children, but the joyousness in nature and play is of precisely the same human quality.

Scarcely less charming is the other donkey picture entitled *Visting Neighbors*, representing Core Weir tying her donkey to a garden gate at about noontime of a summer's day. Whereas the other picture was not only a donkey ride but a decoration, this picture is first and last just a vivid glimpse of the real world somewhere in Connecticut and of a little girl who had a good time with that particular donkey, and who used to tie it to that particular rustic fence which her daddy had noticed took on just that grayish violet tone at that hour of the sun-flecked green midday. The quivering joyous languor of the hour is conveyed in the artist's most masterly manner. The tree trunks are rough and beautifully true, the texture of the bark suggested in striated brush strokes of violet and brown. The drowsy, gray donkey and the little girl are immersed in sun and air. As the little girl would say, "It's the good old summer time." There is a monotony of content everywhere. How it stills the soul to feel a little breeze in one's hair, to stretch one's body till it thrills, to play with children and animals, to be a child again and follow the rule of one's own caprice in the great outdoors! Richard Hevey, poet of comradeship and open sky, has put the mood into living language:

"O good damp smell of the ground,
O rough, sweet bark of the trees,
O clear, sharp cracklings of sound,
O life that's athrill and abound
With the vigor of boyhood and morning
And the noon-time's rapture of ease!

Was there ever a weary heart in the world,
A lag in the body's urge,
Or a flag to the spirit's wings?
Did a man's heart ever break
For a lost hope's sake?
For here there's such lilt in the quiet
And such calm in the quiver of things."

Back of the old farm house at Brancheville is the rocky hillside which Alden Weir has immortalized in that epic picture of the American farmer amid soil and sky entitled, *Plowing for Buckwheat*. Weir did not want us to think that the frame for this picture would contain all that was worth transcribing. He wished us to understand that his viewpoint was more or less unstudied, that what he painted was a hastily selected part of the big world of cloud-shine and old trees and fallow, fertile fields which stretched immeasurably above and beyond the borders of his canvas. This largeness of nature worship and this unconscious function he performed of painting epic poetry accounts for what has been called a carelessness on Weir's part in composing his landscapes. We have seen that in the *Donkey Ride* he could satisfy those who require a pattern in a picture, but the essential Weir was more concerned with expressing the big though simple emotion which nature gave him than with the patterns which could be arranged out of her raw materials. If you are a lover of open American hill country, not the culminating majesty of mountain peaks, nor the perfection of paradise valleys, but just nice livable, lovable farm land, neither too opulent nor too austere, then you will enjoy yourself in the landscapes of Weir. The season is usually summer, the hour, morning or approaching noon, with overhead light in a pale sky. In the *Plowing for Buchwheat*, great billowy clouds are crisply accented against the azure in silvered brilliancy. A drowsy heat pervades the air. It feels good to drop down on some sweet smelling hay under some friendly tree and look up. An imperceptible breeze stirs the upper branches. The distant woods are mellowed by traveling shadows. It is pleasant to watch the

slow, brown oxen that plow the sunbaked hillside and the farmer who turns from his plow with a friendly "how-d'do." In the Fishing Party the sun, under which we stand, seems to silver the ferny foreground, and the sky, so subtly modulated in key from the horizon up, and the distant woods, beyond the open fields. Across a little bridge pass the white clad figures of friends going a-fishing. If only one could paint the hum of insect life and of incidental, unimportant human voices, the sensation of any sunny summer day on the farm would be complete. And Weir was no more true in recording day than in remembering night. He fascinates with the exact effect of a spooky darkness as fitfully glimpsed in the flare of a rusty old lantern.

In painting people instead of places it is fascinating to see Weir's mind concerned with different problems and expressing beauty and character with a technical method of combed lines and varied surfaces for conveying a sense of flesh and fabric under diffused light, which is perhaps even more individual and distinctive than the short strokes, the embroidering touch employed so wonderfully for the landscapes. In the many paintings in oil and water color celebrating the charm of children, one is led to believe that Weir's genius was never more inspired than in the interpretation of childhood. Who can forget the sweet and demure little girl whose kitten slumbers in her gently folded arms? This picture deserves to rank among the great portraits of children. Even Sargent's Beatrice and the Bird Cage is not more beautiful than this Lizzie Lynch of Weir. Sargent becomes tender and reverent in painting children, but when they grow up he sees them in his worldly way, wisely and without sentiment. Weir's humanity did not stop with children. His imagination was deeply moved by the old-fashioned American girl as he loved to think of her in her sensitive, radiant youth, full of her sweet contradictions, free and frank and fine of body and soul, the comrade and playmate of man, yet more puritan than pagan, with an inarticulate reserve coming up at the first hint of sentiment, to conceal depths of dear

mysterious, feminine emotion. All this we seem to know about Weir's young American woman without, of course, ever stopping to analyze her, which would be destructive of the charm the artist makes us feel in her presence. Weir was the inspired interpreter of a chosen American type marked by a penetrating sort of refinement which he revered and to which he could impart a charm through the chivalric graciousness and the Hellenic joyousness of his own mind. This refinement which he saw and sought to express was not at all a matter of class or race, although the New England woman of old Anglo-Saxon lineage was a favorite theme. In the portrait of Miss De L. at the Corcoran Gallery in Washington we feel Weir's interest and respect for a type which might be called middle class European. We rather think (something in the colors of the dress perhaps suggests it) that she is a Swiss governess, that she teaches French year after year in some American school and is homesick for the old country. Or perhaps she is a dressmaker, or manages a small shop. She has been good looking, but years of drudgery and disappointment have exacted their toll. She is a brave, good woman. And so it is always with the types chosen by Weir. He sets us wondering about them. The men also are interpreted with profound sympathy and understanding, their physical beings suggested so that we feel their living presence in the pigments. The portrait of his brother, Colonel Weir, is a masterpiece and, as the subject requires, is ruggedly painted in a style which would have done injustice to his gentler sitters. And the portrait of the great poet-painter, Ryder—what a noble head! We know that this man was a genius and that he lived in a world of his own invention. Weir was Ryder's guardian angel. Some day there will be a tale to tell, a revelation of all that the great-hearted Weir was to poor Ryder, and it will be a most beautiful legend. No two men could have been more different. There was never anything literary or mystical about Weir, and yet he understood Ryder's art, and in his portrait we understand the superb

intellect and greatness of soul which animated the lonely poet, whose eccentric personality and shabby appearance might have attracted mere curiosity and pity from the casual observer.

Perhaps the finest of Weir's many interpretations of feminine character is *The Gentlewoman* (Pl. XXIV), of the National Gallery in Washington—a person of rather austere intellectual type, one might assume at first glance, yet soon enough we recognize that she is really a gentle, gray lady whose meditations are sound and sweet. It is delightful to remember her, the simple lines and colors of her dress, the unobtrusive dignity of her hands, the smouldering light in her downcast eyes, as of spent moments and bright memories. With infinite sympathy and admiration her youth has been revealed in the very embarrassment of taking leave of her for always. Yet we see that the art of living is ever at her command and that the years will add to her exquisite distinction. Hers is a personality before which we stand uncovered, introduced by a great-hearted gentleman who knows her worth and whose praise is as fine a tribute to woman as ever an age of chivalry could boast. The man who created this portrait was not merely an accomplished painter; he was a great artist and inspired by a great ideal.

If *The Gentlewoman* is Weir's masterpiece in the idealized naturalism of his figure paintings, the *Pan* and the *Wolf* may be chosen (it was his own choice) as his most important landscape. Certainly it is the most impressive because of its classic grandeur of design. The artist seems to have said to himself, "Now suppose I try a classic landscape as Corot would have painted had he lived a little longer"—and so there is the same glamour of twilight on the edge of a wood, of color lingering in the western sky, of the illusions that linger in a green glade all silvered in dew-drenched dimness, of the antique figures we imagine in a dreamy dusk. But now there is added pale air that trembles, transparent shadows on the rocks and jewelled gleams woven through the mystery of dark and light to make

the memory of on-coming night not only more beautiful but more true. It was a daring thing to challenge comparison with Corot, yet the comparison was inevitable, nor does Weir suffer by it. The Frenchman may have been the greater master of design and the more perfect painter, but he confined himself to a much narrower range. Weir was incapable of repeating the Pan and the Wolf as Corot repeated over and over his dance of dryads or of Italianized shepherds in sylvan settings where every tree is in its proper place. The two men were most alike and most spontaneous and delightful when they were content to represent the familiar scenes they lived in and learned to love. Corot pleases me most in his bright little *paysages intimes* of sunny country roads and his well loved lake near D'avray. And it seems to me that it is not the Weir of the impressive Pan and the Wolf, but of such pictures as the Fishing Party, the Plowing for Buckwheat, the High Pasture, the Corner of the Field, the Birches at Wyndham, the Building of Dam-Shetucket and the Woodland Rocks, who will live forever as the poet-painter who sang the song of spring and summer and autumn in the American countryside, the song of American trees and skies and of New England fields, for all their stones, and of friendly woods, not in spite of but because of their slender second growth. Weir loved nature too much in particular places to alter the aspect of his familiar world. If an ideal loveliness is in his landscapes, it is the idealism again of the man's own nature expressing its joy in reality through a magic of beautiful painting.

Weir's wonderful versatility and courage for new experiment, the adventurous spirit of the man, continued till his old age, and it is a joy to record that his latest pictures are in many ways his best. There seemed to be an ever increasing mastery in his method of solving each problem. Never before had he been more certain to achieve beauty of texture and solidity of form, evanescence of light and concealment of labor. The Knitting of 1918 has exquisite transitions of light and the most enchanting tones. The modelling achieves

on a flat surface, and without apparent effort, a perfect realization of weight as well as form. The drawing is profoundly sensitive and expressive of the subject, a wholesome American girl day-dreaming as she knits her helmet of gray wool for the boy who will fight for her rather more than for democracy. In spite of fatal illness and failing strength, J. Alden Weir, in this affectionate tribute to the American woman in the war, did his bit with all his accustomed genius, nobility, and charm. On the 8th of December 1919, Weir died of heart failure after a protracted illness through which he had been inexhaustibly cheerful, patient, and gloriously productive. He will always symbolize for me in his life and express for me in his art the wholesome sagacity of choice, the nervous complexity of purpose, the high unformulated ideals, and the virile simplicity of soul of our own, our fundamental United States.

2



PLATE XXV



Fig. 1—PETROGRAD, MUSEUM OF ALEXANDER III: LAST DAYS OF POMPEII
BY BRYLOFF.



Fig. 2—TOLEDO, MUSEUM OF ART: THE FLOWERS, BY SEIDENBERG.

A Russian Painter Of The Nineteenth Century, Elyas Repin

by LOUIS E. LORD

In selecting Elyas Repin as a representative Russian painter of the nineteenth century I am not so much interested in the biography nor even the artistic career of the man as I am in showing how he epitomizes the Russian painting of that period. This important school of painting has been little studied by western critics; there are few copies of the paintings outside Russia and few names that have commanded an international reputation. Veretchagin is perhaps the one conspicuous exception, but in Russia the fame of Repin overtops that of this great war painter.

I have often thought that the history of a country could be more intimately written from a careful survey of the contents of its art galleries than from the dispatches in the war office. In France it would be easy to trace the development of the people's soul and even to infer the political development from the frozen classicism of David, through the grace and freshness of the Barbizon school and the prurient prettiness of the later art to the clear flame that burns alike in the genius of Rodin and the artificers of the commemorative medallions. So in the Russian painting of the nineteenth century the historian may read all the details of an oppressed people's struggles to be free.

The significant work of the century began in 1834 with the exhibition of Bryloff's *Last Days of Pompeii* (Pl. XXV, fig. 1). Perhaps no painting has ever been received with more enthusiasm. While it was being painted in Rome, the most exaggerated reports were spread as to its excellence. It is said that Sir Walter Scott sat speechless before it for an hour and then said that the artist had created not a picture but an epic. Its fame preceded its arrival at St. Petersburg and

from the time of its exhibition there in 1834 till the death of the artist in 1852, Bryloff was a dictator in Russian art. It is difficult for us to see in the painting anything to justify such enthusiasm. A contemporary says that the painter has "stolen the fires of Vesuvius and lightnings of heaven." The colors may have faded somewhat. At any rate they are now cold and hard; the figures are confused and the interest dissipated. The painting gives the unfortunate impression of being a sort of unhappy and unwilling combination of the congealed classicism of David and the boisterous turmoil of Tintoretto. The best portion of the picture is not the central group—the open-mouthed woman whose flight is assisted by her husband and hindered by her clinging child—but the group of male figures at the left, struggling with the falling door. Here the painter may be said to have fairly solved the problem of intricate and united action. In the left foreground the painter has represented himself—a bearded man in middle life. Stilted and grandiose as this painting is, it forms the basis on which modern Russian painting is developed. From 1834 till 1863 the prevailing type is the large canvas, the semi-historical subject.

Two tendencies were, however, at work which resulted in the secession of 1870, the founding of the Artel, and the overthrow of this stilted pseudo-classicism. These were, realism as represented by Venetziannoff, Fedetoff, Peroff, (and in religious painting, Ivanoff), and purpose painting. The latter is the most characteristic feature of Russian nineteenth century painting. We should now call it propaganda and be charmed with our penetration as we always are when we delude ourselves with the belief that we have solved a problem by renaming it. It was part of the liberal movement begun with the accession of that kindly tyrant Alexander Second in 1855. The Nihilists began their campaign of "going in among the people." In literature the works of Gogol and Tolstoi began to arraign the governmental abuses. Purpose painting—

such painting as *The Apotheosis of War* by Veretchagin, "dedicated to all conquerors, past, present, and to come," with its bitter satire on the glories of war and the fruits thereof, or *The Plowers of Seidenberg* (Pl. XXV, fig. 2), with its scathing indictment of conditions on the Russian estates, began to be in vogue. The mediaeval artist wrought for the glory of God, the Russian artist for the destruction of autocracy. The paintings of this school reveal the pathos and despair of Russian life—the deadly apathy that has ceased to feel pain, that has never known delight, the greed and injustice of oppression, the endless waiting for deliverance, the absence of desire. These men are in a sense realists, but the world that they depict is that old Russian world where the *lacrimae rerum* never cease—that world whose divinities are not the merciful twin gods Hypnos and Thanatos, but the Erenys of desolation and despair.

From this purpose painting historical painting was an easy development. Figure and landscape painting—painting for its own sake and not for moral purposes—came later when the earlier impulse had exhausted itself and the artists perceived that the beauty of the painting might in itself be an aim. In the most general terms, then, it may be said that Russian painting developed from a formal classicism through realism and purpose painting to a free and independent art.

Elyas Repin has passed through all these stages, save the first, and seems equally at home in them all. He was born, of Cossack ancestry, in 1844. He was educated in the Royal Academy and studied in France and Italy. He has, however, taken nothing from his residence abroad except an unusually careful technique and a thorough grounding in the elements of his art—a background of exact knowledge which many of his countrymen lack. Practically all his life has been lived in Russia. In thought and feeling he is thoroughly Russian. In versatility he is nearly the rival of Menzel. He has painted with distinction in almost every field except that of religious art. Here his attempts

have been conspicuous failures. He seems, like Rembrandt, unable to paint forms which he has never seen. Manoah's Opfer in the Dresden gallery, with the curiously unhappy angel which mars that picture illustrates my meaning. Something of this inability to visualize satisfactorily unreal figures seems Repin's only limitation.

The Arrest in a Village is one of his purpose paintings. It is an early work. In a barren room lighted by a narrow window and a half-open door, stands a young man who has just been seized by the agents of the secret police. The officer in charge is examining some of the documents which have been found and from the room half disclosed at the right, another spy is eagerly bringing fresh evidence. Through the door is also to be seen the face of the terrified young wife. The contrast between the open scornful face of the prisoner and the fiendish anxiety of the spy who is bending over the officer in charge is masterly.

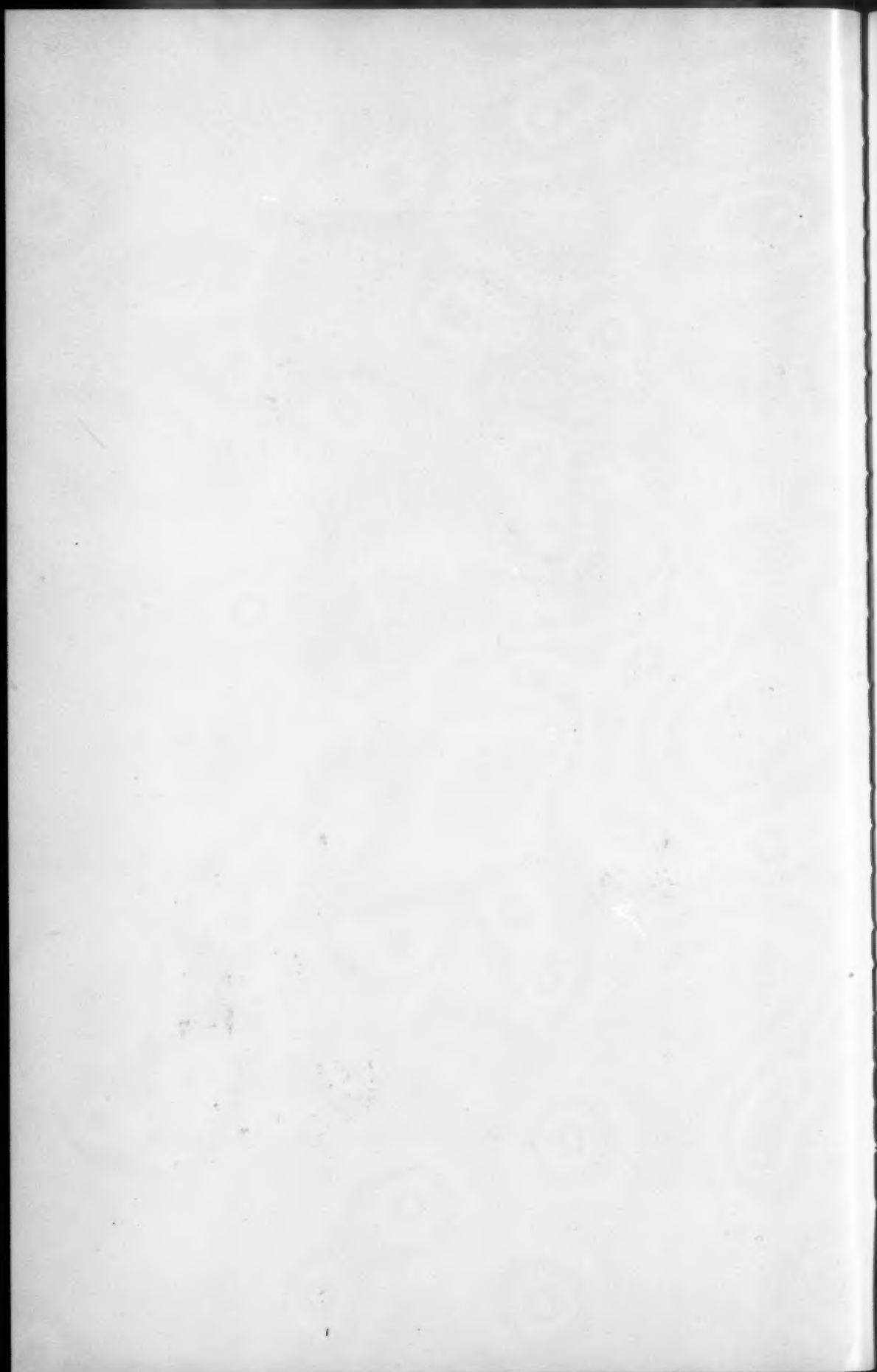
The Reply of the Cossacks to Sultan Mohammed IV (Pl. XXVI, fig. 2) was one of Repin's favorite historical themes. Himself descended from the Cossacks, he seems to become by his own right an interpreter of their boisterous glee. A letter is to be written in answer to the Sultan's demands. The scribe sits at the table and about him are gathered the general, his staff, and many privates. They are vying with each other in suggesting insults and gibes which the scribe is writing with the keenest of appreciation. There are many variants of this picture. One is reminded of the many versions of Boecklin's Island of the Dead. These pictures are a veritable riot of color. The number of facial types is also remarkable. Every shade of mirth from sneers to shouts of laughter is there. The brush strokes are bold, the effects broad and sure. The paint is laid on in great masses, reminding one of Rembrandt's later style. The faces are carefully modeled and the clothing and ornaments only broadly sketched in. They are masterpieces of composition and justly among the most esteemed works of this artist.



Fig. 1—MOSCOW, TRETIAKOFF GALLERY: IVAN THE
TERRIBLE AND HIS SON, BY REPIN.



Fig. 2—PETROGRAD, MUSEUM OF ALEXANDER III: REPLY OF THE COSSACKS
TO SULTAN MOHAMMED IV, BY REPIN.



In the Tretiakoff Gallery in Moscow a crowd can always be found before the awful painting of Ivan the Terrible and his Son (Pl. XXVI, fig. 1). Women sometimes faint here and an attendant is always in the neighborhood in case of eventualities. Some years ago a man became temporarily deranged while looking at the picture, and slashed it across with his knife. Ivan in a fit of anger has struck his son with his iron pointed staff and realized too late that his blow has been fatal. The realism of this painting is almost overpowering. The ghastly details are revolting. The blood streaming from the head and nose of the dying prince, his vacant eye, and the insane ecstasy of fear in the assassin's eyes are things that haunt the imagination.

Repin is equally at home in painting Russian peasant scenes. In a department of art which C. E. Makovsky and Vasnetzoff have made particularly their own, he is able to surpass either as it were almost casually. Russian peasants have few festivities, but they know how to enjoy those few with the utter abandon of children. "The care that rides behind the horseman" is not theirs. The spirit of the village dance, the spirit of the imperial ballet without a trace of its grace and lightness, lives in Repin's picture of The Village Dance with its ring of eager observers, the fond couple at the right, the village critic on the left, and the musicians in the left foreground. What a contrast the latter are, the violinist with her light touch and rapt expression and the blacksmith who presides over the pipes—a typical Marsyas!

Neither Veretchagin nor Repin are portrait artists, yet each could turn his hand to this if necessary—witness the portrait of an old steward in the Alexander Third gallery at Petrograd and Repin's painting of Leo Tolstoi. Repin has painted the great writer many times but Tolstoi at the Plow (Pl. XXVII, fig. 1), is the Russian critics' favorite. It is Tolstoi in his own chosen occupation. In the study of the face one forgets almost how carefully the artist has managed the elements of his picture. The very idiosyncracies of Russian agricultural implements are made to screen and

reveal the central figure. There is a suggestion of the novelist's own great nature in the sweep of the hills and the cleansing breath of the breeze. It seems almost impossible that the same man who drew the careless children of *The Village Dance* should have also given us the monumental resolution and the brooding pity of this stern face. It is the face of a nation's hero who like *Regulus of Rome* has put from him the clients who crowd about him and the relatives who would stay his course and treads alone the path of his own soul's salvation.

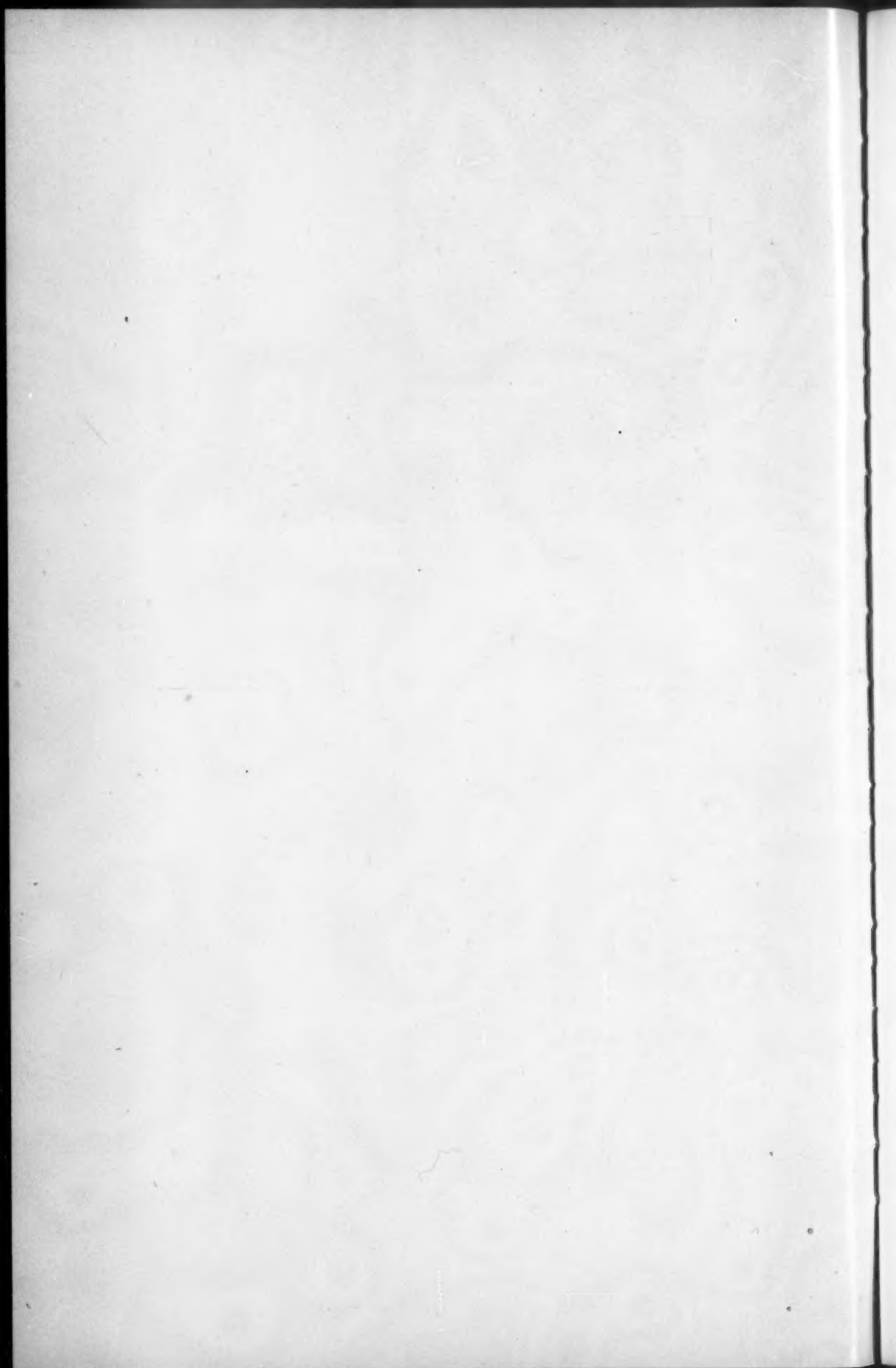
The *Burlaki* (Pl. XXVII, fig. 2)—the haulers of the Volga—is, perhaps, Repin's masterpiece. Along a strip of barren sand, under a pitiless sun, a group of peasants are slowly advancing laboriously towing a heavy vessel. The first impression the painting conveys is one of sheer weariness. It is the impossible physical strain that breaks the heart. They are of many types and all ages—these haulers—one is a man bowed with years, another just a lad who is not yet broken to the work, and he lifts his shoulderstrap to readjust the strain; he is wistful, questioning vaguely, almost rebellious; another is almost overcome with the heat and shades his head with his hand and arm, one is a loafer, but he is the only one. The rest all step in time. If the strains of the pathetic "*Song of the Volga Boatman*" could only be heard the picture would be complete. It is just such a sight as I once saw looking down on the Volga from the Kremlin at Nijni Novgorod: the broad, peaceful plain before me, the sun setting beyond the far hills, the noble river, a broad silver band, drawn to a thread on either horizon, and from its bank far below the weary strains of the haulers' song floated up like the wail of a people forgotten of God, like the refrain of the Russian national hymn, "Grant to us peace in our time, O Lord."



Fig. 1—MOSCOW, TRETIAKOFF GALLERY: TOLSTOI AT THE PLOW, BY REPIN.



Fig. 2—THE BURLAKI, BY REPIN.



The History Of Interior Decoration

by ROSSITER HOWARD

Day by day as we are watching the elaborately mechanized systems of the nineteenth century disintegrate, or melt in the heat of passionate desire for change, as we feel civilization in a state of flux, with many still unmolten fragments of the old systems floating about, we art students must all of us be eagerly watching for forms expressive of the new epoch; for we are in the habit of reading the drama of world history through the things which man has made for his pleasure—his houses, furniture, pictures, temples. History to us is not a line extending backward into a distant past, but is rather a sphere into which all of the past is rolled, and we in the center of it have acquaintances in all epochs who tell us how the ball grew.

How is it with our students? Are geology, archaeology, history, literature, music, art, physics and economics united as threads in the tissue that has been woven and which we are still weaving? Or have the teachers of these things been so keen about their own subjects that they have kept them unrelated to each other, and therefore unrelated to the lives of the students? Such compartment education is going out of fashion in our public schools, and art teachers more than any others can help to bring about a more vital organization of knowledge in the colleges.

The branch of art history that more than any other offers opportunity to make vivid the history of the race is the history of man's habitations and their furnishings. And this subject has another great advantage—it touches our personal life more closely than any other and establishes an aesthetic connection between the student and his surroundings, making conscious his reactions and intensifying them.

The Roman house is a conspicuous example. It interprets the Roman family so racily that the student may have familiar intercourse with the people of the time, especially if he may read a bit of the literature which his ancient friends read, and enter into their public problems. He may relate the Roman not only to the past, but to the future, and see a glimpse of his descendants in the houses of Spain and Italy and the furnishings of the Renaissance and the French Empire. If he does these things while he is studying the Roman house, he will find it of vastly more importance and interest than he will if he takes each thing only in its chronological place; he can make the Roman house for the time being the center of his consciousness, reaching out not only backward but forward and in all directions to the contemporary countries touched by the Roman. More than that, he can carry the Roman problem of living into his own town, and see if his people in New England or Minnesota have solved the problems as satisfactorily, especially those of intimate private life in the outdoor part of the home.

Studied in that way the history of the home performs the two great functions of art history. On the one hand it gives the student a view of the human race as a stupendous organism growing out of an infinitely distant past into an infinite future, a vast drama with quite clearly defined acts, each in its own peculiar mood but all having similar dramatic tendencies and all made of the same stuff that we see around us today in the turmoil of changing scenery and costumes for a new act. On the other hand it stimulates his reactions to his own surroundings, clarifying his vision, refining his tastes, and improving the quality of our building and manufactures through creating a desire for certain good things which our ancestors have had.

You will say that this is a large order, and impossible to execute except very superficially. It is. But I want to suggest that there are two categories of superficiality. It is not only possible but usual for a college teacher to give his class a considerable knowledge of a restricted subject, even a satisfactorily deep

knowledge, so that the class can pass a stiff examination, and then send out his students with scarcely any of that knowledge really under the skin, a part of the living thought of them. The course was not superficial; the effect on the student was tragically so. If a student should not know an *impluvium* from a *cucina* but felt a friendliness for the Roman family, with its love of authentic imitations of antiques and its vast influence on the later life of Europe, and went home to see how he could arrange his living room and backyard to gain a bit of the old Roman's privacy with his flowers and fountains—then the result of the course would be of a less harmful type of superficiality than the academic.

The most difficult obstacle I have found to be not the number of contacts necessary for the purposes I have suggested—though that is difficult enough, in all conscience—but the lack of immediate acquaintance on the part of the students with actual objects discussed. When a student speaks of a Gothic chest in mahogany, the conclusion is not merely that he has not sufficiently read his textbook; rather it is that when he did read it, he did not see and feel with mental eye and hand the thing he was reading of. Any study of furniture will remain academic and lifeless unless the students may see and feel things similar to those they are studying. In the matter of architecture and gardens, the student may see about him actual stone and flowers, even actual examples of columns and arches; so that lantern slides will give him some sort of feeling of the buildings and grounds. Lantern slides are better than plates, for they make one look up at vaultings, etc., and give a certain effect of scale. But furniture and textiles are deceiving in pictures. If there is an adequate museum in the city, this difficulty of realization may readily be overcome; but without a museum there is no way out but through exhibitions.

These entail a great deal of labor and require a certain courage to divert energy from textbook information; but for effective education better less information in the head—it will soon be forgotten anyway—and more realization of eye and hand, for the experience of sight

and touch becomes a permanent part of the student. Certainly it will be impossible to have enough exhibitions in any year to cover the whole subject, and it will usually be impossible to reconstruct classical, Gothic or Renaissance rooms. The earlier periods will have to be taught by illustrations, books and lectures; but from the seventeenth century down there is enough material in most towns, a few antique specimens and many modern reproductions more or less accurate, to make possible effective exhibitions which will show the students actual objects, with their proper textures and colors.

There is no need of elaborate installation or great expense. If no small hall is available, even a class room may be made effective. If the room is small, we can take one period at a time, and it is not even necessary to separate dining room from living room, for the furniture can be grouped according to function. Perhaps a more lively sense of the individual character of the several centuries is given by showing them at once, and separating them by screens—simple framework eight feet high and as long as needed, filled with "compo board" and held upright by crosspieces nailed to the bottom. There is almost everywhere an abundance of early nineteenth century furniture, showing the effect of the French Empire and reflecting ancient Rome. And there is a great deal of "Colonial" furniture, which brought eighteenth century traditions of Europe into the first years of the nineteenth century in this country. In the larger cities there is also a good deal of seventeenth century oak and walnut in the homes of wealthy men who are ready enough to lend it for exhibition.

Beautiful reproductions of ancient hangings are made today by American manufacturers, who are glad to lend them for exhibition. These can be used decoratively, in connection with imaginary doors and windows. It is not necessary to tempt the public to hypercriticism by trying to make openings illusionistic; a frank acceptance of limitations disarms such criticism, and leaves the way clear for enjoyment of the actual effect.

Paintings of the periods, not necessarily of the first class, are to be found in most cities; but if they are not available, old prints are not difficult to find; and failing those, reproductions of characteristic works of the periods are always to be had for the asking, if they are offered for sale.

Old china and silverware are never lacking, and these with ancient laces and other decorative objects may be grouped with the things of their own period.

Even the Italian Renaissance is not impossible to illustrate with a degree of vitality far in excess of books and plates, if one will but seek through the homes and stores and borrow somewhat from manufacturers of modern reproductions.

Please do not think that I am speaking from experience in a museum. I have seen such exhibitions in a little town on the prairie of South Dakota, and I received a letter only a few days ago from the same town saying that the Art Club was arranging another such right now. Even in the Minneapolis Institute of Arts, many of our best exhibits have been borrowed from homes in the town; and last summer we had an exhibition of furniture, showing ancient and modern placed side by side for comparison, most of it borrowed from homes, from manufacturers, and from department stores. It required work, but it was worth it, for we have not yet ceased to hear of it from all over the country. Yet it was nothing but what most of you could accomplish, in some scale, in your own towns. It seems to me beyond argument that the effect of such exhibitions on the student is of more permanent value than a great deal of very forgettable art history.

A large number of people will visit such exhibitions without seeing them. The things by themselves will not function to any great extent, they need the academic knowledge which is so useless by itself. The students themselves will see and feel, particularly if they are required to write critically of the exhibition or of something in it; but the public will need additional stimulus. This may be given partly by gallery talks, and partly by adequate labeling. It is not enough to in-

dicating what each object is, and give its provenance and date; there should be some sentence to stimulate attention to the object. Sometimes the label may suggest derivation of design, sometimes influence of some other epoch or nation, sometimes it may call attention to the finish; but almost always it will prove most stimulating if it suggests a comparison of some sort with some other object in the collection.

Usually the first effect of an acquaintance with the art of the past is to raise a desire for examples of the early art or for authentic reproductions of them; but such a course as this ought to show the futility of attempting any exact repetition of antiquity, for eclecticism is seen to be a characteristic of decadence, and each age has its own qualities which bloom in forms of its own, developing out of earlier forms, and the march of civilization is only hindered when artist turns archaeologist. But we can aim to give the student a vision of the unity of history, in which he is an actor, give him pleasant acquaintances in many ages along the way, and develop within him a sensibility to the beauty, or lack of it, in his own surroundings.

REVIEWS

THE FOUNDATIONS OF CLASSIC ARCHITECTURE. BY HERBERT LANGFORD WARREN.

Pp. xiv, 357. Illustrated from documents and original drawings.
The Macmillan Company, New York, 1919.

This handsome volume, printed on thick glossy paper, with only a few misprints (pp. 119, 143, 150, 261, 284, 327), contains five chapters, which discuss Egypt, Mesopotamia, Persia, the Aegean, and Greece (The Temple, Greek Mouldings, The Doric Order, Origin of the Doric Style, Periods of the Doric Style, The Doric Temples of the Archaic Period, The Doric Temples of the Period of Full Development, The Ionic Style and The Ionic Order, The Culmination in Attica). The introduction, by Fiske Kimball, tells us that in this work of the former dean of the faculty of architecture of Harvard University, left in manuscript at his death, is presented in enduring form the essence of his vital teaching of the history and principles of architecture. There are quotations from Warren's essay on the study of architectural history and an account of his life and achievements as set forth in the minute recorded by the Harvard faculty and in other tributes, and finally a brief resumé of his writings and their culmination in this book.

The book is stimulating and gives a very good general account of architecture down to the time of the Erechtheum, but unfortunately stops there and does not even take up the wonderful Hellenistic works of architecture such as the great Asia Minor temples and other buildings at Pergamum, Priene, Sardis, Ephesus, Didyma, etc., to say nothing of the Etruscan and Roman elements which belong to the foundations of classic architecture. Unfortunately, there are only 119 illustrations and many of those used, such as that of the temple at Corinth (p. 234) and those of the Erechtheum before the west wall and other walls were replaced (pp. 340, 347), have long been antiquated. It is hardly true, at least for Greek architecture, that the

body of authentic documents here reproduced is unequalled in any general work covering the same field, (cf., for example, Sturgis, *History of Architecture*, vol. 1); though, to be sure there is yet no first-rate scientific history of Greek architecture in English as good as Durm's *Baukunst der Griechen*, and that despite the fact that American architects in the last twenty years have carried on the most important researches concerned with the buildings of the acropolis and its sides.

There are many little errors in the book which should have been read in proof or manuscript by some archaeologist with first hand knowledge. P. 136 we hear of bronze heads on the lions (rather lionesses) at the famous lions gate at Mycenae, that they and the bodies were gilt, that the relief was low. P. 137, the number of beehive tombs known is far in excess of twenty-five, and they exist from Thessaly (rather than Boeotia) to Crete. It is not true that each beehive tomb (p. 138) has a rectangular side chamber; I know of only two such. There is no evidence that the triangular opening above the doorway of the "tomb of Agamemnon," as the so-called "treasury of Atreus" is here termed, was closed by an enriched bronze plaque (p. 139). The Heraeum at Olympia (pp. 147, 176) is no older probably than the oldest Argive Heraeum excavated by the Americans and not mentioned by Warren. It, too, had wooden columns and marks the transition to the Doric style. The cella of the early temples is unlike the megaron (p. 147) at Tiryns but not unlike the Thessalian megaron. The crepidoma has usually three steps, of which the topmost is the stylobate, sometimes, especially in Sicily, more, but not two (p. 161). Even the so-called Theseum has three steps, not two, as some of the older books say. P. 235, Powell's plan of the temple at Corinth (*A. J. A.* IX, 1905, pp. 44f) supersedes Dörpfeld's which is reproduced in figure 72. P. 261, read Amasis for Amosis. P. 266, figure 84 from Furtwängler and Ulrichs, *Greek and Roman Sculpture* (English edition by Taylor, 1914) is attributed to Furtwängler's *Masterpieces of Greek and*

Roman Sculpture. P. 282, figure 90, the name of the excavator of Miletus is Wiegand, not Weigand. P. 284, the temple of Cybele at Sardis should be the temple of Artemis, and figure 91 is upside down. P. 304, long before the Romans Pericles and later Antiochus had reared a temple on the foundations of the Olympieum. P. 305, G. F. Hill should be B. H. Hill, the director of the American School in Athens. P. 307, and p. 301, with reference to the plan of the acropolis at Athens, the new location for the monument of Nicias discovered by Dinsmoor (*A. J. A.* XIV, 1910, pp. 459f) should be given. P. 309, the Erechtheum is wrongly said to have been used as a harem and the Parthenon to have been destroyed in 1686. The date was September 26, 1687. P. 310, the horses of Poseidon are given to Athena. P. 311, the west wall of the Erechtheum was not overthrown by a bombardment between 1824 and 1832, but by a windstorm of 1852, which also threw down one of the columns of the Olympieum. P. 323, the rear chamber in the Parthenon was called Parthenon because it was the chamber of the Virgin Goddess, Athena Parthenos, not because it was a virgin's chamber (cf. *Arch. Anz.* 1894, p. 122). P. 333, the acroteria of the Parthenon have been reconstructed from fragments, (cf. the British Museum publication of the *Sculptures of the Parthenon* by A. H. Smith). Pp. 342, 343, J. R. Wheeler becomes G. R. Wheeler.

There are also many theories with which not all students of Greek architecture would agree. The Doric column is supposed to have a stone origin but the Ionic column a wooden prototype; and the statements about the origin of the Doric entablature do not take into account the different articles on the subject, such as Holland's in *A. J. A.* XXI, 1917, pp. 117f. It would have been well to cite some of the books on the origin of the Doric and Ionic columns, such as Puchstein, *Die Ionische Säule*, and Lichtenberg *Die Ionische Säule*, both published in 1907 but with opposite theories. On the whole, however, the book is a very good and readable account of the main characteristics of architecture down to 400 B. C.

David M. Robinson.

NOTES

MINUTES OF THE NINTH ANNUAL MEETING OF THE COLLEGE ART ASSOCIATION OF AMERICA

The Executive Committee met at the Hotel Euclid, Cleveland, Ohio, April 1, 1920, at 11 A. M. It was voted that the College Art Association discontinue chapter membership in the American Federation of Arts.

The Association met for the addresses of welcome, the reports of committees, and the reading of papers at the Cleveland Museum of Art, April 1, 1920, at 2 P. M.

The Secretary-Treasurer reported a balance on hand of \$117.42. Upon the approval of the Auditing Committee the report was adopted.

The Committee on Membership told of the progress made during the year: besides the large number of library subscriptions to the Art Bulletin, a small number of individuals had been attracted by the scheme of Christmas gift cards; the most successful work, however, was that done through private solicitation.

The Committee on Books for the College Art Library reported that its work was nearly ready for publication and that the Fogg Museum was prepared to issue the Committee's book list as one of the museum publications.

The Committee on Reproductions for the College Museum and Art Gallery stated that the international situation necessitated the delay of its undertaking.

The Committee on Research Work and Graduate Teaching in Art submitted for criticism a summary of the purposes of the investigation it is conducting. A complete report will be presented at a later meeting.

The Committee on Exhibitions reported that although there had been considerable interest shown in its labors and a voluminous correspondence had resulted the actual call for exhibitions had not been great enough to warrant the continuance of the Committee's efforts.

The Committee on Publicity expressed its conviction that good newspaper and magazine notices would be effective in securing members but that the employment of professional publicity agents, such as the Anson Company, would not be so satisfactory as the appointment of a vigorous committee to work uninterruptedly throughout the year.

The Association met for business and the election of officers at the Cleveland Museum of Art, April 3, 1920, at 4 P. M.

A constitutional amendment providing for life membership was adopted.

An appropriate resolution thanking those whose combined efforts had made the ninth annual meeting a success was presented by the Committee on Resolutions and adopted by the Association.

With the advice and consent of the Committee on Books for the College Art Library, the Committee on Publications presented a recommendation that the book list under preparation be published as a number of the bulletin of the College Art Association. The Executive Committee recorded its endorsement and the publication was voted by the Association.

In accordance with the report of the Committee on Nominations the following officers were elected by acclamation:

President: David M. Robinson; Vice-president: Paul J. Sachs; Secretary-Treasurer: John Shapley; Directors: Edward Robinson and Frank J. Mather, Jr.